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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 228th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 14 April 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF THE RAPPORTEUR OF THE COMMITTEE

2. Mr. ÇARIKÇI (Turkey) nominated Mr. Saliba (Malta) for the office of Rapporteur.

3. Mr. Saliba (Malta) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY AND THE PROPOSED EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Permanent Observer for Palestine) said that the recent illegal actions of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially its decision to construct housing for 25,000 Israeli settlers at Jabal abu Ghneim outside occupied Jerusalem, had seriously endangered the peace process and raised tensions in the region, and constituted a clear threat to international peace and security.

5. The Palestinian Authority had tried, through direct contacts and through the co-sponsors of the peace process, to remedy the situation by initiating negotiations; those efforts had continued throughout the month of March at the United Nations and particularly in the Security Council, with the participation and assistance of the League of Arab States. In particular, on 15 March, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 51/223 calling upon Israel to desist from any further settlement activities in the occupied territories. However, those efforts had ultimately been unsuccessful owing to the United States veto of the draft resolution submitted by Egypt in the Security Council.

6. In view of the Security Council's failure on two occasions to maintain international peace and security, and of the continued construction of the Jabal abu Ghneim settlement by Israel, in addition to numerous other violations of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, the Palestinian Authority was resorting to a request for an emergency special session of the General Assembly. That would allow the General Assembly to recommend the measures necessary to ensure the immediate cessation by Israel of construction at the Jabal abu Ghneim settlement, as well as of any other illegal actions in Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian territories. As a result, the peace process would be saved and returned to its proper track.

7. On 30 March 1997, the Arab Group had submitted an official request, supported at the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, for the holding of an emergency special session of the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General had thereupon sought the views of all Member States on the request. In view of the importance of the Committee's position to the ultimate success of the request, the Permanent Observer for Palestine therefore called

upon all members of the Committee to respond positively and urgently to the Secretary-General's inquiry. If possible, the emergency special session should open on Tuesday, 15 April 1997, and conclude the following day; in view of the important Islamic religious holiday on 17 April, however, the session could be postponed until Monday 21 April, depending on the response of Member States.

8. The Arab Group had agreed on a draft resolution reaffirming the responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine, reiterating support for the peace process and the need to implement the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and calling for the adoption of the necessary recommendations for collective measures. Such recommendations included calling on all States to prevent the provision of trade or financial assistance to bodies directly involved in illegal activities in the occupied territories, and calling on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take other appropriate measures to ensure respect for the Convention by Israel. The draft also requested the Secretary-General to send a team of United Nations observers to the occupied Palestinian territory, and to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution within two months of its adoption. Such actions would not constitute sanctions against Israel; the draft resolution merely called for preventing assistance to the agencies and bodies directly involved in violations of international law.

9. The position of the Palestinian Authority, as communicated to United States authorities in a recent series of meetings in Washington D.C., was that the parties should emphasize their commitment to the peace process, construction of the Jabal abu Ghneim settlement and all other settlements in the occupied territories should be stopped immediately, and long-overdue agreements should be implemented (including safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, the construction of airport and port facilities, and the return of refugees displaced since 1967). In return, the Palestinian Authority reaffirmed its commitment to the peace process and to the implementation of the agreements concluded in connection with that process.

10. The CHAIRMAN, speaking in his capacity as Permanent Representative of Senegal, said that his delegation had been following with great concern the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the consequent threat to the peace process. A common feature of the various declarations adopted in response to that situation by such bodies as the League of Arab States and the Ministerial Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement was an appeal to support the holding of an emergency special session of the General Assembly. Senegal had already responded favourably to that request.

11. He suggested that the draft resolution just mentioned should include an appeal by the General Assembly to the co-presidents and co-signatories to the various peace accords to protect and preserve the peace process.

12. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) said that he too had observed the firm commitment to Palestine expressed at the recent Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held at New Delhi. As a practical matter, however, it was important that each member of the Movement should individually indicate to the Secretary-General its support for the convening of an emergency special session of the

General Assembly. Members should be made aware of the "talking points" and should be given concise, technical information about recent developments. They should also have an opportunity to review the main points of the proposed draft resolution. The suggestion by the representative of Senegal that the draft resolution should contain an appeal from the General Assembly to the co-sponsors of the peace process to protect and save that process was a useful one.

13. Mr. AKBAR (Pakistan) said that Member States must understand that it was absolutely essential for them to submit individual requests to the Secretary-General for the convening of the proposed emergency special session. Pakistan had already taken the necessary steps to transmit such a request.

14. Mr. RODRÍGUEZ PARILLA (Cuba) said that the international community as a whole and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in particular, had a special responsibility with regard to the situation in East Jerusalem and the construction of new Israeli settlements there. In the light of the Security Council's failure to assume its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security, Member States must use the powers of the General Assembly to ensure compliance with the commitments entered into under the peace process, which was now in great danger. For its part, Cuba was prepared to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

15. He himself had attended the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement at New Delhi, and the position adopted at that Meeting reflected the Movement's unanimous support for the convening of an emergency special session, in view of the worsening situation on the ground. Cuba had already communicated to the Secretary-General its own support for the convening of such a session, and urged other States to do the same.

16. Mr. NGO QUANG XUAN (Observer for Viet Nam) said that his Government had already informed the Secretary-General of its support for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly. Some States, however, especially those which were members of the Non-Aligned Movement, believed that the letter sent by the Movement would be sufficient indication of their support. It should therefore be made clear that each Permanent Mission must send a separate letter to the Secretary-General.

17. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the current meeting was taking place against the backdrop of the aggressive and provocative policies of Israel in the occupied Arab territories and of the failure of the international community to respond adequately. The Committee had always regarded the situation in the occupied territories as its special obligation and Member States must therefore show their support for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly.

18. Ms. ZHANG Qiyue (Observer for China) said that China, which had always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people, had already sent a letter to the Secretary-General in support of the convening of an emergency special session. Developments in the region had reached a critical point, and she therefore hoped that such a session could be convened without delay.

19. Mr. AG OUMAR (Mali) said that the proposal before the Committee was in keeping with the recommendations of the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Mali had already communicated to the Secretary-General its support for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly. It also supported the draft resolution proposed by the Arab Group, which should also take into account the addition proposed by the representative of Senegal.

20. Mr. NATALEGAWA (Indonesia) said that, as Chairman of the Islamic Group, Indonesia had already submitted a formal letter in support of the convening of an emergency special session. He shared the views expressed by other delegations on the need to respond positively to the request for the convening of such a session.

21. Mrs. CAMARA (Guinea) said that her Government firmly supported the cause of the Palestinian people, and had already sent a letter to the Secretary-General expressing its support for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly.

22. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) welcomed the support expressed by Committee members for the convening of an emergency special session. The Senegalese suggestion was a useful one, and should be included in the draft resolution. It might also be useful for the Chairman to write to the Secretary-General expressing the Committee's support for the proposal to convene an emergency special session of the General Assembly and indicating that that expression of support should be construed as individual replies from each member State concerned.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.